

EXHIBIT “M”



Find products, advice, tech news

[Home](#) > [Reviews](#) > [Security](#) > [Parental Control](#)

McAfee Safe Family Review

Decent parental control software hampered by poor usability and performance issues

●●●○○○ **2.5 Fair**

By [Ben Moore](#)

Updated April 10, 2020



THE BOTTOM LINE

McAfee Safe Family offers several standard parental control tools and can monitor an unlimited number of PCs and phones. However, its Windows app is sluggish in testing, it does not support macOS devices, and it lacks a web interface.

MSRP \$7.99

\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

[See It](#)

PCMag editors select and review products [independently](#). If you buy through affiliate links, we may earn commissions, which help support our testing. [Learn more](#).

PROS

- ✓ Works on an unlimited number of devices
- ✓ Solid time-management and app-blocking features
- ✓ Geofencing capabilities

McAfee Safe Family

\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

[See It](#)

CONS

- No uninstall protection on Windows devices
- Poor performance on Windows in testing
- Does not support Macs
- No web interface

MCAFEE SAFE FAMILY SPECS

Free Version	No
Device Limits	None
Per-User Settings	Yes

ALL SPECS ▾

The best way to protect your children from digital threats is with parental control software.

McAfee's parental control solution, McAfee Safe Family, the successor to its McAfee Family Pass software, offers web filtering, time management, geofencing, and app-blocking tools for an unlimited number of Android, iOS, and Windows devices. However, it does not support Macs, can be removed without a password on iOS and Windows, and suffered from performance issues in our testing. Turn to Editors' Choice Qustodio for a better parental control experience.

Pricing and Platforms

McAfee Safe Family's pricing is simple. The service costs \$7.99 per month to protect an unlimited number of devices. Alternatively, you can save a significant amount of money by opting for the \$49.99-per-year annual subscription. You can try Safe Family for yourself using its 30-day trial, but there's no permanent free version. **McAfee Safe Family works on Android, iOS, and Windows**, but not macOS.

Compared with other parental control software, Safe Family's annual plan is competitive. Qustodio costs \$54.95 per year for five device licenses that can be used across all platforms, including on macOS. Norton Family Premier only charges \$49.99 per year for an unlimited number of devices, but also does not support Macs. Kaspersky Safe Kids is an even better deal. For \$14.99 per year, you can use its software with an unlimited number of Android, iOS, macOS, and Windows devices. Mobicip even supports Chrome OS.

I tested McAfee Safe Family on an original Google Pixel and a Pixel 3 running Android 10, an iPhone 8 on iOS 11, and a Lenovo T470 running Windows 10. If you are specifically looking to monitor and restrict your child's activity on their mobile devices, check out our roundup of the best parental control apps for your phone.

SIMILAR PRODUCTS

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

[See It](#)



3.5 Good

See Price

[Mobicip Review](#)



2.5 Fair

FamilyTime Premium

[Read Our FamilyTime Premium Review](#)



3.5 Good

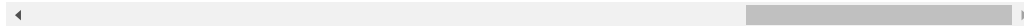
Circle Home Plus

\$129.00

See It

at Circle

[Read Our Circle Home Plus Review](#)



Getting Started

Signing up for McAfee Safe Family is simple. You just need to provide a name, email address, and password. If you are adding a new device, just download the app and sign in from there. Next, you choose which kid it belongs to or create a new child profile.

[ADVERTISEMENT](#)

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

See It



PC EDITORS' CHOICE **RATED EXCELLENT** **Epson EcoTank ET-4760 All-In-One Printer Review**

"For home and small offices that print several hundred pages per month, it's an excellent pick, earning it our Editors' Choice."
— PCMag Editor

[Learn More](#)

The Safe Family Windows app downloads quickly but takes a little while to install. McAfee offers a single app on both Android and iOS platforms, which functions as both the child and parent app. You choose either the child or parent mode during setup. On Android, you need to give the app accessibility and device administration permissions. On iOS, the process is similar. You need to enable notification and location access, as well as install McAfee's mobile device management (MDM) profile.

The problem is that tech-savvy kids can easily remove or get around Safe Family's reach. On Windows, kids can simply uninstall the app (without needing the account password), which is a notable oversight. Uninstalling does set off a notification (to me, the parent) but oddly, the app instructed me to reinstall the app from the Google Play Store, which makes no sense, given that we're talking about a Windows installation. On iOS, kids can uninstall the MDM profile without entering a password. This is typical, since MDM profiles (in the way that parental control services use them) cannot require a password to uninstall. On Android, a child can't disable the app's device admin access permission without a parent's participation.

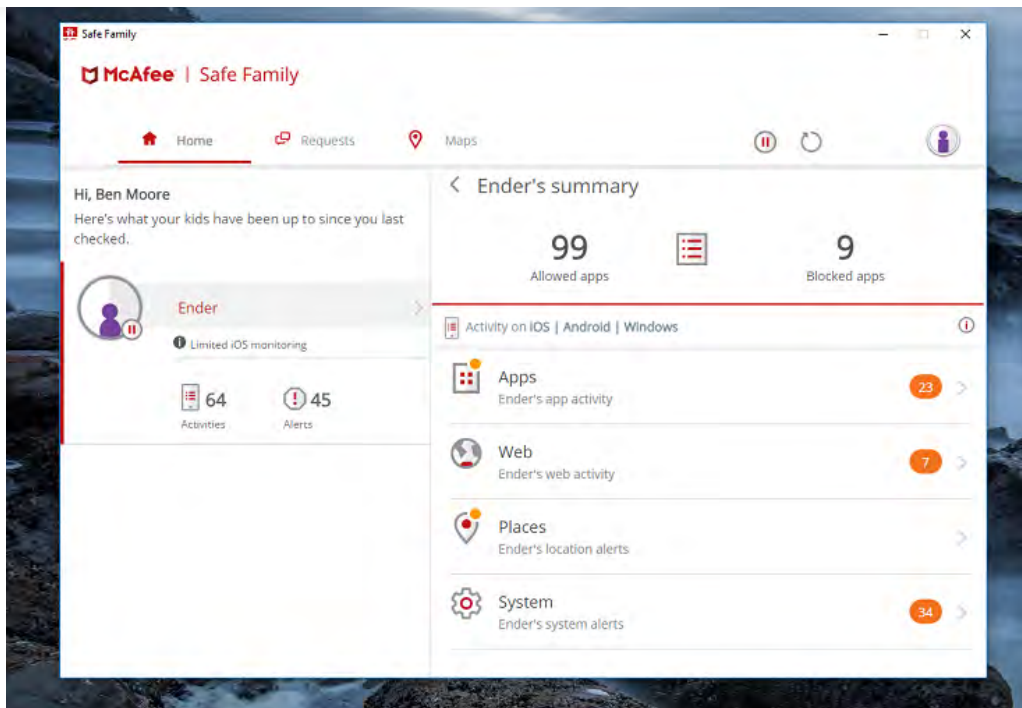
Safe Family did post a message in the device section of the parent's app telling me to check any devices for which protection was uninstalled, but the app continued to allow me to change preferences as if nothing had happened. In most cases, Safe Family sends a notification when its software is affected in any way.

Windows App

McAfee Safe Family's app had major performance issues in my testing. In parental mode, it works fine, aside from occasional stutters when switching between screens. However, when I installed McAfee Safe Family in child mode, it slowed two different Windows 10 test machines to a crawl, making them nearly unusable. McAfee needs to address this problem. I reported this behavior to the company, but there is currently not a fix for this.

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

[See It](#)



The desktop interface looks fine, but the design and layout could use improvement. For example, the iconography is inconsistent. The three main tabs (Home, Requests, and Maps) all have flat, red icons. However, most of the other elements and icons on the page add gray outlines and shading. One minor gripe is that Safe Family's desktop app cannot be resized, which is problematic, since the default window is almost as many pixels in height as my laptop's screen.

ADVERTISEMENT

PC EDITOR'S CHOICE 4.5 EXCELLENT

Norton 360 Deluxe (for Mac)

"Norton 360 Deluxe delivers lab-certified Mac antivirus protection along with a two-way firewall, a password manager, and a full-powered VPN."

— Neil J. Rubenking, PCMag

Learn More

The Home section is where you change most of the configuration options. Safe Family lists all of your children in a left-hand menu along with any associated activities or alerts. Keep in mind that McAfee requires you to have at least one child set up with your account at all times. That means if you want to remove a profile, you need at least two child profiles. If you click on a child's icon, you arrive at a page with their activity details, alerts, recent locations, rules, and associated devices. There is no way to remove a device from McAfee by itself. You need to delete the associated child account entirely to get rid of any linked devices. This is a pain in cases when your child has multiple devices and you only want to remove one of them; it's easier to just leave things as they are on your McAfee account and remove the software on the local device.

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

[See It](#)

send messages alongside most requests, but Safe family limits communication to just that; you can't maintain conversations with family members as with Boomerang's Family Messaging feature. I would like to see parental control solutions include encrypted messaging capabilities so that family members could securely communicate with each other.

The Maps section shows both your location and your child's location on an interactive map. You can define any number of places for monitoring your child's whereabouts (more on location tracking later). On the far left side of the screen, McAfee includes a button for pausing all devices associated with a child's profile. When you enable this feature, kids cannot access any installed apps, save for basics such as the phone and messaging apps. If you click on the purple profile icon, McAfee opens a menu with Profile, Subscription, Help, and Account links. You can edit your profile, add a child account, or contact support among other actions. McAfee fixed a previous bug in which it was not possible to scroll down far enough to switch between the child and parent modes).

McAfee Safe Family does not offer any sort of web interface for managing rules and restrictions. Practically every other parental control service PCMag has reviewed, including the mobile-only ones, offers a web presence for easy access to these settings. Norton Family Premier's web interface, for example, has a great layout and is accessible from anywhere. With McAfee Safe Family, you need to use either the mobile apps or the Windows desktop app to make changes, which is inconvenient. Thankfully, any changes you make sync across all devices.

ADVERTISEMENT



HALF OFF NEW LINES

ADDED TO QUALIFYING FAMILY PLANS

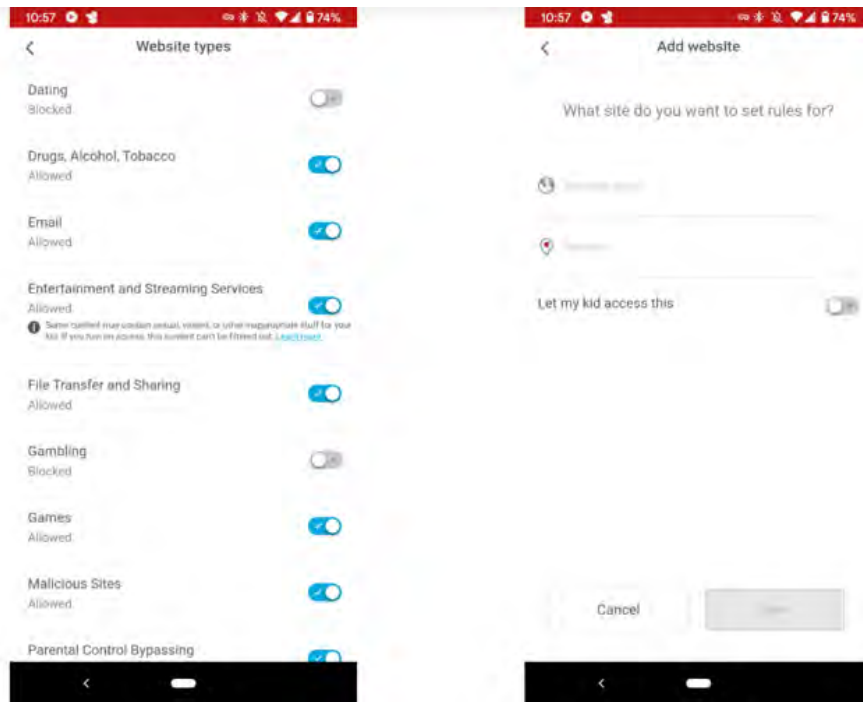
Web Restrictions

McAfee Safe Family's web restrictions are buried in the Rules section. Web filtering does not apply to iOS devices. Apple includes its own set of built-in tools for filtering the web, but they aren't as comprehensive as those you get with a dedicated parental control app on Android. Check out our feature on how to use Screen Time on your iOS device.

In Safe Family's Web section, you can choose which type of websites your child can access. Categories include Dating, Gambling, Social Networking, and Violent. Unfortunately, McAfee does not provide a description of those categories or list any examples of websites that fall under their umbrellas. For example, it is unclear what the School Cheating web category blocks. In theory, this could apply to essay-sharing sites, but could also block sites such as Stack Overflow (invaluable for computer science courses) and notecard sites like Quizlet, which both have legitimate and

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

See It



Safe Family's web restrictions are also limited in that they rely on web site categories exclusively. So, when you allow an entire category of sites by keyword, it can't detect and block whatever inappropriate content may be on that page. It should at least add a profanity filter, such as the one that Net Nanny offers.

ADVERTISEMENT

Norton 360 Deluxe

"In addition to cross-platform security, hosted online backup, and a ton of security features, Norton 360 Deluxe gives you a no-limits VPN and full-featured parental control system that would cost plenty by themselves. It's a high-security bargain."

— Neil J. Rubenking, PCMag

Learn More

Download Now

On Windows, I tried to test Safe Family's web-blocking capabilities using Google Chrome, Opera, and Vivaldi, but found that the Safe Family slowed my Windows 10 test devices so much that it took several minutes to even launch a browser, let alone conduct tests. In previous test sessions, McAfee Safe Family did successfully block HTTPS-encrypted sites on those browsers. Parents, of course, can block any non-compliant browsers their kids find. I discuss the service's full app-blocking capabilities in the next section.

I had an easier time testing Safe Family with Chrome and Firefox Focus on my Google Pixel running Android 10. Safe Family performed without issue on Chrome. It successfully blocked HTTPS-encrypted sites when I tried to access them, even after I connected to a VPN. However, when using the privacy-focused Firefox Focus and Tor browsers, Safe Family did not prevent me

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

[See It](#)

Another issue arose when I tried accessing these sites via the Google Search widget that is part of the default Pixel launcher. Alarming, Safe Family did not block my access to any of the websites when using this interface. You can close this loophole by blocking Chrome entirely, but then you need to download a new app for web browsing if you want your child to be able to access the internet at all.

For parents who don't want to constantly check which browser their kid is using, one option might be for Safe Family to add a dedicated browser. Boomerang, for example, offers a competent Mozilla-based web browser for both Android and iOS that lets parents closely control access to sites. But again, children can avoid this entire mess by switching to the guest account (on an Android device at least) and using Chrome. Unlike many other parental control services, McAfee Safe Family cannot monitor searches or lock Safe Search settings.

ADVERTISEMENT

Bitdefender® **Stay connected!**
Bitdefender has your back



BUY NOW

App Blocking

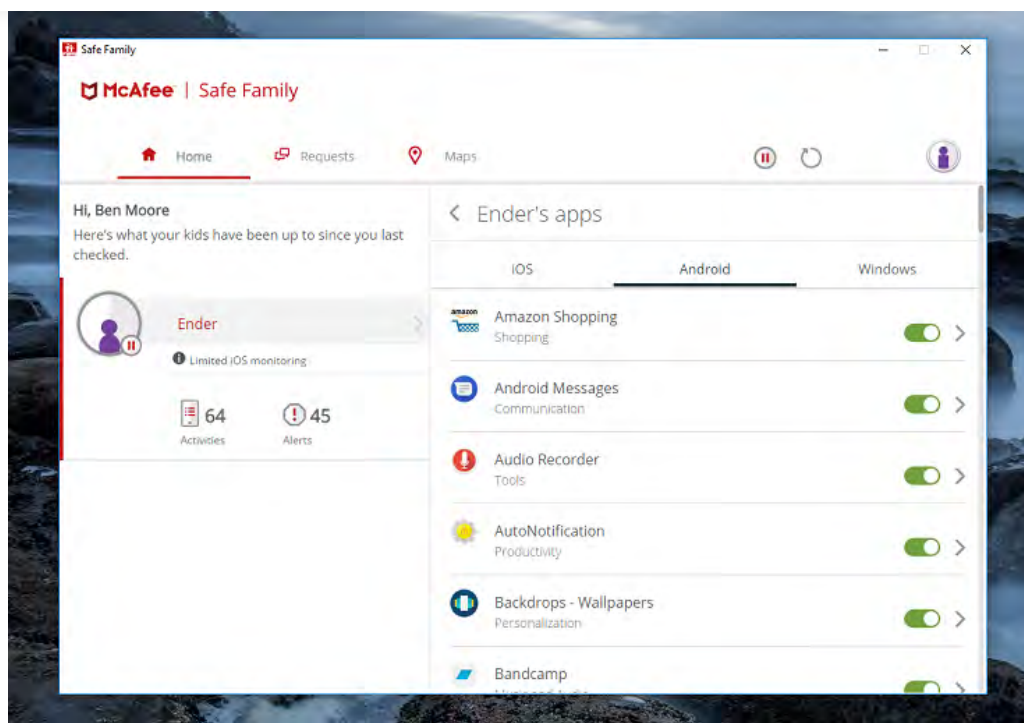
Safe Family, like many other parental control services, allows parents to control what apps their kids use. To set up restrictions, head over to the Rules section, and then hit the Apps tab. Here, Safe Family breaks down restrictions based on device platform. Alternatively, from the child's activity summary, you can click the top header area to view the list of installed apps on each platform.

For Android, you can simply toggle access on or off. Most others including Qustodio and LocateMy works in the same way. If you click the Expand arrow, Safe Family shows you information about the app, along with screenshots, and its associated category. These description pages work best on Android and iOS devices since they pull directly from the platform's respective app stores.

As I discuss in a later section, you can also set an overall time usage limit on a per-app basis (on Android and Windows). When kids try to launch a blocked app, it shows a warning with an option to ask permission from the parent.

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

See It



For Windows, the process works much in the same way and Safe Family did detect apps I installed from the Microsoft Store this time around. On iOS, due to Apple's policies, the only way to block apps is by age rating. For my test device, Safe Family organized these apps into categories ranging from 4+ to 17+. Most of the default iOS apps don't appear on this list, but again, that is due to Apple's stricter device policies. In practice, when you disable access to an app, Safe Family simply removes it from the home screen. Use Apple's built-in Screen Time tools for more control.

ADVERTISEMENT

Time Management

Safe Family's time-management features are simple and effective. Parents just define the times and days when children are allowed to use their devices. I also like that time restrictions apply to all of a child's devices, so they can't simply switch to their tablet when they run out of time on their phone. Time management rules only work with Windows and Android devices.

By default, Safe Family enables two screen-time schedules: Weekdays and Weekends. You can choose to modify those to your liking or delete them and start anew. Simply give your schedule a

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

See It

Another time-tracking feature is the ability to limit the total number of hours your kids can use each app. To set this up, simply click on the app's detail page (from the app-blocking section), hit Set a limit, and choose a total time limit (30-minute increments). I wish that Safe Kids allowed for more flexibility in the hours allowed. This feature works as advertised, and restrictions kicked in once I reached the end of the specified time period.

Safe Family doesn't go as far as other parental control apps in time restrictions. Most other apps, including Norton Family Premier, allow you to specify a total amount of time a child can spend on the device, in addition to a usage schedule. Safe Family also does not let kids earn additional time by completing tasks or chores, which is a useful feature that Screen Time offers. Locategy supports time limits and schedules for individual apps, too.

One last time-tracking feature is Safe Family's Pause button. This is an increasingly common feature in parental control services. When you pause screen time, Safe Family locks down a device's installed apps. On Android, you can still access the Phone app and the settings. On iOS, the default apps such as Phone and Messaging remain unhidden, but it blocks Safari, the app store, and any other installed apps. On Windows, Safe family blocks all the apps it detects. I appreciate that Safe Family allows kids to still use the respective Phone apps on each platform in case of an emergency.

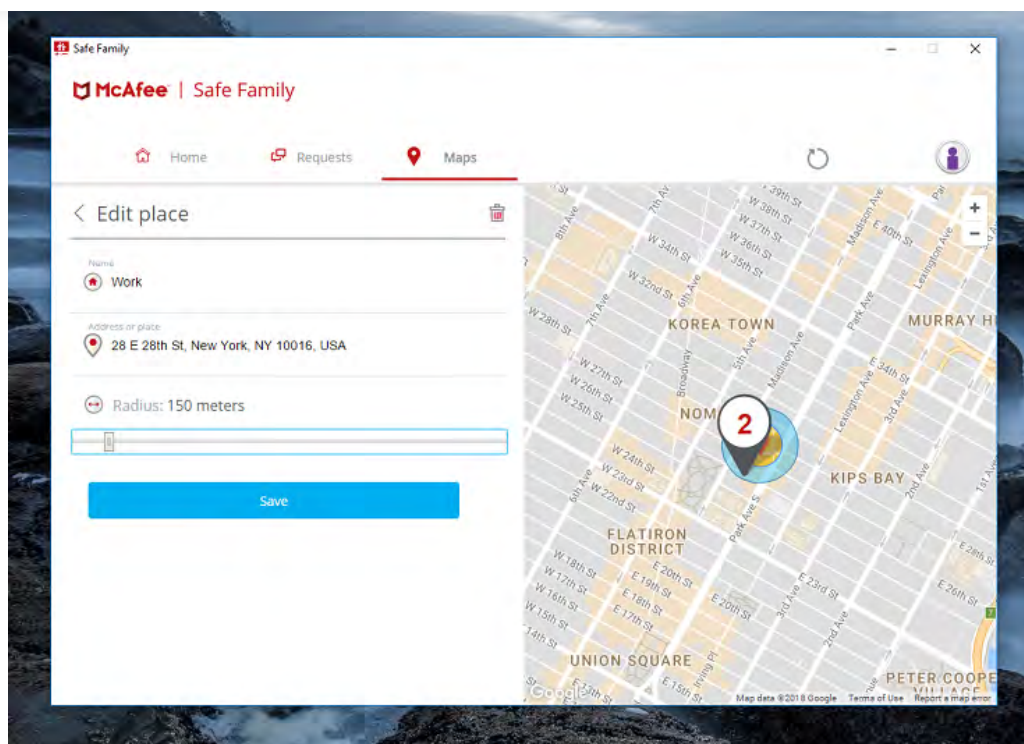
ADVERTISEMENT

Location Tracking

Under the Maps tab of the interface, you see a menu in the upper-left-hand side of the screen where you can set rules. This menu lists the location of everyone in your family as well as the time of the last location update (it claims to be accurate within a range of about 10-15 minutes). You can also define any number of places from this menu. You can configure McAfee to notify you when your child leaves or arrives at any of these locations. Another term for this type of feature is geofencing,

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

See It



To set up a place, simply give it a name, provide an address, and select the radius of the boundary. You can set the radius anywhere from 100 to 750 meters. You can also toggle whether McAfee should notify you only when your child arrives at or leaves a location (or both). I set up my work address as a place and McAfee successfully kept track of when I arrived and left during the day. Keep in mind that this functionality does not work if your child disables the location feature at the system level (or turns off their phone), but Safe Family notifies you if location data is not available on a monitored device.

ADVERTISEMENT

McAfee's location tracking features are average for the category. Boomerang goes one step further by letting parents draw custom borders around a location. Kaspersky Safe Kids lets you define schedules for when your child should be within a boundary.

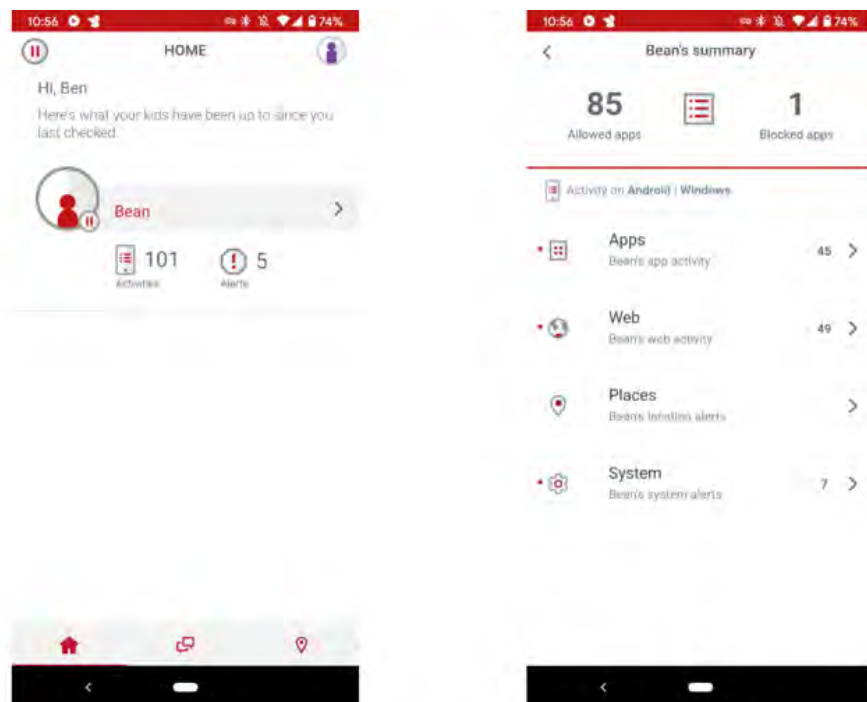
From the mobile app, children can check in to places on their own and send an accompanying message. I saw the alert on my parent device quickly, but the message took a few extra minutes and popped up in the requests tab.

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

See It

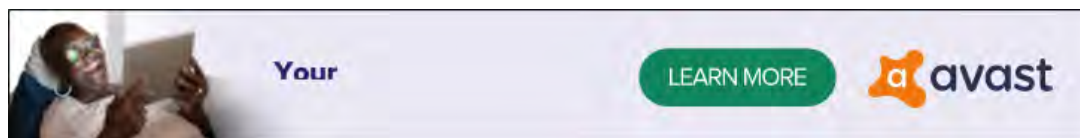
I configured McAfee Safe Family on a Pixel 3 (parent) and a Google Pixel (child) both running Android 10. Setup was quick and simple. McAfee offers one parental control app for Android and you specify who the device belongs to (child or parent) during setup. The app performed better in testing this time around, though the design could still be streamlined.

At the top of the app, you can pause all device access (on the left) or access a profile menu (on the right). This menu allows you to add a kid, contact support, or switch to the child mode. Don't worry about this last part; a kid would need the account email and password to switch to the parent mode.



I like that the app shows your subscription details and lets you make changes to them. The center of the main page lists all the children associated with your account. Click on a child's icon to view their activities and alerts or to set up rules. You navigate the app using the three tabs at the bottom: Home, Requests, and Maps. Those sections work the same as on the desktop.

ADVERTISEMENT



I like the way Safe Family lets kids view most of the activity they generate. Kids have access to their app usage, web, and location history, in addition to any alerts associated with the account

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

See It

missing from the app is an SOS button, similar to the one FamilyTime implements. In an emergency, kids can press a dedicated button in FamilyTime to quickly send their location and any urgent information to a group of trusted contacts.

Safe Family for iOS

I installed McAfee Safe family on an iPhone 8 running iOS 11 and signed in without any issues. You need to enable both notification and location permissions as well as install McAfee's MDM profile to complete the setup. As with the Android version, McAfee offers a single app and you choose whether to configure it as a child or parental device during setup.


McAfee gets credit for an informational popup that explains that on iOS, Safe Family only allows you to hide apps and monitor your child's location. Visually, the app looks identical to its Android counterpart, with a white background, red accents, a sidebar menu on the right hand of the screen, and navigational tabs on the bottom.

Room for Improvement

McAfee Safe Family has some serious flaws, most notably that it doesn't support Macs and slowed my Windows 10 test machines to a crawl in the monitored mode. (I'll update this review if a fix for the performance issue is forthcoming.) Additionally, it's easy to remove on Windows and iOS devices, though you will get a notification of such tampering. Safe Family does, however, support an unlimited number of devices and offer standard location-tracking and time-management capabilities. Take a look at Editors' Choice Qustodio for more sophisticated, reliable features, and better device support.

McAfee Safe Family

●●○○○ 2.5



[See It](#)

\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

MSRP \$7.99

PROS

- ✓ Works on an unlimited number of devices
- ✓ Solid time-management and app-blocking features
- ✓ Geofencing capabilities

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

[See It](#)

- Poor performance on Windows in testing
- Does not support Macs
- No web interface

THE BOTTOM LINE

McAfee Safe Family offers several standard parental control tools and can monitor an unlimited number of PCs and phones. However, its Windows app is sluggish in testing, it does not support macOS devices, and it lacks a web interface.

Like What You're Reading?

Sign up for **Security Watch** newsletter for our top privacy and security stories delivered right to your inbox.



This newsletter may contain advertising, deals, or affiliate links. Subscribing to a newsletter indicates your consent to our [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). You may unsubscribe from the newsletters at any time.

Be the First to React

Was this article helpful?



Yes

0



No

0

Comment or Add Your Own Review

☆☆☆☆☆ 0 | 0 Ratings ▾

🔔 Log In

Be the first to Review...



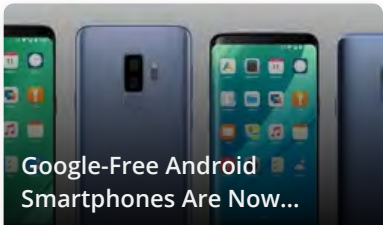
Powered by OpenWeb

[Terms](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Feedback](#)

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

See It

Popular in the Community



Google-Free Android
Smartphones Are Now...



Kevin Fanch · 3 Mar

I used /e/ and it is definitely
something I will be using for th...

Top Comment



10



Antivirus Merger:
NortonLifeLock to Acquire...



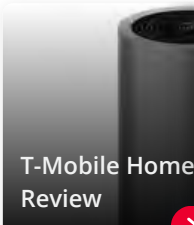
Michael Walker · 14h

My question is how will this
affect the customers of Avast?...

Top Comment



1



T-Mobile Home
Review



Eric_of_AZ

I signed up for T-
5g internet about

Top Comment

ADVERTISEMENT



McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

See It

DIG DEEPER WITH RELATED STORIES



The Best Parental Control Software for 2021

BY BEN MOORE & KIM KEY



Apple vs. Google vs. Microsoft: Who Has the Best Free Parental Controls?

BY KIM KEY



10 Things Every Parent With a Connected Kid Needs to Know

BY KIM KEY



10 Simple Tips to Help Manage Kids' Screen Time

BY JILL DUFFY

PCMAG STORIES YOU'LL LIKE



Google Introduces New Search, YouTube Protections for Children

BY MATTHEW HUMPHRIES



Netflix Adds Family-Friendly Email Recap, Kids Top 10 Row

BY STEPHANIE MLOT



Kaspersky Safe Kids Review

4.0

About Ben Moore

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

See It



Ben Moore is an Analyst for PCMag's software team covering video streaming services, security software, GNU/Linux, and the occasional PC game. He has previously written for Laptop Mag, Neowin.net, and Tom's Guide. Ben holds a degree in New Media and Digital Design from Fordham University at Lincoln Center, where he served as the Editor-in-Chief of The Observer, the student-run newspaper.

Read the latest from Ben Moore

- [Hulu Review](#)
- [IDrive Review](#)
- [Norton Family Review](#)
- [HBO Max Review](#)
- [Showtime Review](#)
- [More from Ben Moore](#)

PC Magazine Digital Edition Read Great Stories Offline on Your Favorite Device! →

PCMag Newsletters Our Best Stories in Your Inbox →

Follow PCMag

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [G](#) [@](#) [p](#)

HONEST, OBJECTIVE REVIEWS

PCMag.com is a leading authority on technology, delivering Labs-based, independent reviews of the latest products and services. Our expert industry analysis and practical solutions help you make better buying decisions and get more from technology.

- How We Test
- Editorial Principles

Reviews	Best Products
Categories	Brands
Events	Series

McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee [See It](#)

[Contact Us](#)[Press Center](#)


© 1996-2021 ZIFF DAVIS, LLC. PCMAG DIGITAL GROUP



PCMag, PCMag.com and PC Magazine are among the federally registered trademarks of Ziff Davis, LLC and may not be used by third parties without explicit permission. The display of third-party trademarks and trade names on this site does not necessarily indicate any affiliation or the endorsement of PCMag. If you click an affiliate link and buy a product or service, we may be paid a fee by that merchant.




[About Ziff Davis](#)[Privacy Policy](#)



[Terms of Use](#)[Advertise](#)



[Accessibility](#)[Do Not Sell My Personal Information](#)

 [AdChoices](#)









McAfee Safe Family
\$7.99 per Month at McAfee

See It